



*Billing Code 3410-15

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utility Service

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

August 24, 2016

The Department of Agriculture has submitted the following information collection requirement(s) to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13. Comments are requested regarding (1) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments regarding this information collection received by [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER] will be considered.

Written comments should be addressed to: Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), New Executive Office Building, 725 – 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20502. Commenters are encouraged to submit their comments to OMB via email to: OIRA_Submission@OMB.EOP.GOV or fax (202) 395-5806 and to Departmental Clearance Office, USDA, OCIO, Mail Stop 7602, Washington, D.C. 20250-7602. Copies of the submission(s) may be obtained by calling (202) 720-8958.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number and the agency informs potential persons who are to respond to the collection of information that such persons are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Rural Utilities Service

TITLE: Preloan Procedures and Requirements for Telecommunications Program

OMB CONTROL NUMBER: 0572-0079

SUMMARY OF COLLECTION: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is a credit agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It makes mortgage loans and loan guarantees to finance telecommunications, electric, and water and waste facilities in rural areas with a loan portfolio that totals nearly \$58 billion. RUS manages loan programs in accordance with the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, 7 U.S.C. 901 et. seq. as amended, (RE Act). Section 201 of the RE Act authorizes the Administrator to make loans to qualified telephone companies for the purpose of providing telephone service to the widest practicable number of rural subscribers.

NEED AND USE OF THE INFORMATION: RUS will collect information using several forms to determine an applicant's eligibility to borrow from RUS under the terms of the RE Act. The information is also used to determine that the Government's security for loans made by RUS are reasonably adequate and that the loans will be repaid within the time agreed. Without the information, RUS could not effectively monitor each borrower's compliance with the loan terms and conditions to properly ensure continued loan security.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS: Business or other for-profit; Not-for-profit institutions

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 18

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES: Reporting: On occasion

TOTAL BURDEN HOURS: 4,687

Rural Utilities Service

TITLE: RUS Form 444, "Wholesale Power Contracts"

OMB CONTROL NUMBER: 0572-0089

SUMMARY OF COLLECTION: The Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (RE Act) as amended (7 U.S.C. 901 et seq.), authorizes the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to make and guarantee loans in the States and Territories of the United States that will enable rural consumers to obtain electric power. Rural consumers formed non-profit electric distribution cooperatives, groups of these distribution cooperatives banded together to form Generation and Transmission cooperatives (G&T's) that generate or purchase power and transmit the power to the distribution systems. All RUS and G&T borrowers will enter into a Wholesale Power Contract with their distribution members by using RUS Form 444, as adapted to meet the needs of the borrower.

NEED AND USE OF THE INFORMATION: To fulfill the purposes of the RE Act RUS will collect information to improve the credit quality and credit worthiness of loans and loan guarantees to G&T borrowers. RUS works closely with lending institutions that provide supplemental loan funds to borrowers. If the information were not collected, RUS could not determine whether Federal security interest would be adequately protected.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS: Not-for profit institutions; Business or other for-profit

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 13

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES: Reporting: On occasion

TOTAL BURDEN HOURS: 78

Rural Utilities Service

TITLE: 7 CFR 1703, Subparts D, E, F, and G, Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program

OMB CONTROL NUMBER: 0572-0096

SUMMARY OF COLLECTION: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is a credit agency of the Department of Agriculture and is authorized by Chapter 1 of subtitle D of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990. The purpose of the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program is to improve telemedicine services and distance learning services in rural areas through the use of telecommunications, computer networks, and related advanced technologies by students, teachers, medical professionals and rural residents. Section 6201 of Title VI of the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79) amended 7 U.S.C. 950aaa *et seq*, by extending the term of the program to the year 2018.

NEED AND USE OF THE INFORMATION: The various forms and narrative statements required are collected from eligible applicants that are public and private, for-profit and not-for-profit rural community facilities, schools, libraries, hospitals, and medical facilities. The purpose of this information is to determine such factors as: eligibility of the applicant; the specific nature of the proposed project; the purposes for which loan and grant funds will be used; project financial and technical feasibility; and compliance with the applicable laws and regulations.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS: Business or other for-profit; Not-for-profit institutions; State, Local or Tribal Government

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 190

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES: Recordkeeping; Reporting: On occasion

TOTAL BURDEN HOURS: 11,031

Rural Utilities Service

TITLE: Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households Program (SEARCH)

OMB CONTROL NUMBER: 0572-0146

SUMMARY OF COLLECTION: The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, Public Law 110-234 (Farm Bill) amended Section 306(a)(2) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (CONACT) (7 U.S.C. 1926(a)(2)). The amendment created a grant program to make Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households (SEARCH) Program grants.

Under the SEARCH program, the Secretary may make predevelopment and planning grants to public or quasi-public agencies, organizations operated on a not-for-profit basis or Indian tribes on Federal and State reservations and other federally recognized Indian tribes. The grant recipients use the grant funds for feasibility studies, design assistance, and technical assistance for direct loans, grants and guaranteed loans, to financially distress communities in rural areas with populations of 2,500 or fewer inhabitants for water and waste disposal projects as authorized in Sections 306(a)(1), 306(a)(2) and 306(a)(24) of the CONACT.

NEED AND USE OF THE INFORMATION: Applicants applying for SEARCH grants must submit an application which includes an application form, various other forms, certifications, and supplemental information. Rural Utility Service will use the information collected from applicants, borrowers, and consultants to determine applicant eligibility, project feasibility, and the applicant's ability to meet the grant and regulatory requirements.

Failure to collect proper information could result in improper determinations of eligibility, improper use of funds, or hindrances in making grants authorized by the SEARCH program.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS: Not-for-profit Institutions and State, Local or Tribal Government

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 125

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES: Reporting: On occasion

TOTAL BURDEN HOURS: 3,688

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*Billing Code 3410-15

[FR Doc. 2016-20725 Filed: 8/29/2016 8:45 am; Publication Date: 8/30/2016]